

INFORMATION FOR HARPSWELL TAXPAYERS

2010 Tax Rate & Homestead Exemption

The Selectmen/Assessors set the 2010 tax rate at \$6.00 per thousand dollars of assessed value. The portion of the tax rate collected for school purposes (including the continued operation of West Harpswell School) is \$4.14, for the County it is \$0.61, and for the municipal budget it is \$1.25. The school assessment decreased by 3.4% (\$252,880), the county assessment decreased by 2% (\$21,354), and the Town budget decreased by 1% (\$39,208).

As a result of action by the State, the homestead exemption in Harpswell has been reduced from \$12,480 in 2009 to \$9,600 in 2010. Despite the decline in the 2010 tax rate from a rate of \$6.19 in 2009, approximately 20 property owners will see an increase in their tax bills because of the higher assessed value that occurs when the homestead exemption is reduced.

FEMA Update

Town Administrator Kristi Eiane and Code Enforcement Assistant Jason Marshall attended a meeting in Portland on Monday, July 12, with (1) officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), (2) staffers from the Congressional Offices of Senator Susan Collins, Senator Olympia Snowe and Representative Chellie Pingree, and (3) officials from other local coastal communities. Harpswell was also represented by its consultant Robert Gerber of Sebago Technics.

FEMA was informed that the Town of Harpswell had commissioned professional engineer Robert Gerber to perform an analysis of FEMA's preliminary mapping work in Harpswell. The Town received the report, which cost over \$17,000, on July 6, 2010 and sent it directly to FEMA for review. Mr. Gerber stated in his transmittal letter to the Town of Harpswell that "of all the municipalities we [Sebago Technics] have worked for in these FEMA provisional map reviews, we have found some of the largest discrepancies between our recommended values and FEMA's flood elevations in the Town of Harpswell."

The Harpswell Town Administrator pressed FEMA to review the Gerber report and consider making changes to the preliminary FEMA maps before beginning the statutory 90-day appeal period. However, FEMA explained that the agency had already experienced a year's delay in the process and that municipalities should expect the formal appeal process to begin on or about July 24. During that period, FEMA will accept information, preferably technical, that will be reviewed and may cause changes to be made to its preliminary work.

The Town encourages all property owners near the coast to visit the Code Enforcement Office to view FEMA's preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) to see how your property may be affected if the new maps are adopted. Any information you wish to submit to FEMA for review, must, under FEMA rules, be submitted through the Town's Code Enforcement Office.

FEMA agreed to hold public meetings in various local communities so that the public could be better informed about the FEMA process, its mapping results, and insurance ramifications. As soon as that meeting date, time and location have been confirmed, the Town will provide public notice on its Web site as well as to local media. The meeting in Harpswell is expected to be held prior to Labor Day.

Recycling Center (8am to 4:15pm) and Transfer Station (8am to 4pm) Schedule

Closed Sunday and Monday; Closed Thursday from January 1 to April 30

Open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday from May 1 to December 31

Please Recycle; It Saves Tax Dollars and is Essential to a Sustainable Future

In 2010 the Town expects 1,100 tons of household solid waste will be transported from the compactors at the Recycling Center to the incinerator at ecomaine's trash-to-energy facility in Portland, Maine at a cost of over \$82,000. There are two ways to reduce the amount of your tax dollars required to dispose of Harpswell's waste. The first is to reduce the amount of material that is consumed, thereby reducing the amount of waste generated. The second is to recycle as much material as possible. Recycling generates revenue that can offset the costs of disposal in two ways—recycled materials are sold, so the more recycled material, the more revenue generated. *(In 2009 over \$52,000 of revenue was received from the sale of recyclables).* Second, the more material that is recycled the less material that is disposed of as trash, decreasing the costs to you, the taxpayer.

The Recycling Center staff asks that all residents do their part to recycle as many cans and as much paper, cardboard, plastic and glass as possible. In addition they ask that all residents refrain from depositing materials that belong at the Transfer Station in the trash compactor. Building materials, yard waste and items larger than the slots in the building must go to the Transfer Station for proper processing. If you toss a large metal item (a barbecue for example) into the compactor because it won't fit in the metal slot, it's a breach of the rules. Please, take the time to take such items up to the Transfer Station and help Harpswell keep its costs down. Also, if you have any questions about where to dispose of items, please ask a staff member.

Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Refund "Circuitbreaker" Application

(for refunds of property tax assessed or rent paid during 2009)

You may qualify for a refund up to \$1,600 if:

You do not have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2009 household income was \$64,950 or less;
or you have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2009 household income was \$86,600 or less
AND

Your 2009 property tax was more than 4% of your 2009 household income; or,
The rent you paid in 2009 was more than 20% of your 2009 household income.

NOTE: Low-income Seniors do not need to meet these requirements.

Applications must be filed by May 31, 2011.

How Do I Apply for a Circuitbreaker Refund?

File online now at www.maine.gov/revenue OR mail a completed application to Maine Revenue Services, P.O. Box 9116, Augusta, ME 04332-9116

Where Can I Get a Circuitbreaker Application Booklet?

Booklets and applications may be downloaded from the Maine Revenue Services web site at www.maine.gov/revenue/forms/hoempage.html.

Applicants who would like to have a booklet mailed directly to them may call the forms line at 624-7894 (leave your name and mailing address).

Town Treasurer Marguerite Kelly is available at the Town Office to assist Harpswell residents with the Circuitbreaker application. Call her at 833-5771 to schedule an appointment.